



with

**STRIKING WESTERN  
WASHINGTON UNION  
CARPENTERS**



Councilmember  
**Kshama Sawant**

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We stand in solidarity with our sisters, brothers, and siblings of the Western Washington Union Carpenters, who are on strike.

Workers have been pressed from all sides and our conditions have been deteriorating. At the same time, American billionaires are raking in super profits—just since the COVID crisis began, the billionaires have become nearly two trillion dollars richer. Meanwhile, Seattle rents have blown up another 25 percent already this year, and carpenters and other workers increasingly cannot afford to live in the city they help build and run.

**But despite all the odds, rank-and-file carpenters are saying enough! We stand unequivocally with carpenters in their fight against the contractor bosses for a fair contract:**

- Fully-paid parking
- Fully-funded benefits
- Family-supporting wages
- Improved protections against harassment
- Three-year contract along with all building and construction trades

No worker should have to chase overtime, or worry about healthcare, retirement, or wages, just to get by. We support striking carpenters in word and deed, and urge every friend of labor to do the same—including elected officials both labor and public. We urge organizations and individuals to donate to the union's strike fund as soon as one is opened. We support the carpenters' calls to be able to picket all possible job sites, in order to bring the highest pressure to bear to win their demands.

Carpenters are fighting against the "market share" philosophy—the idea that they must compete with non-union carpenters for who will work the cheapest. This is a race to the bottom for all workers, and undermines the purpose of having a union. This divide-and-conquer strategy of the bosses must be rejected.

Carpenters are correctly opposing the idea of a four-year contract separating them from the majority of the building trades' contract negotiations. Workers have the most power when we stand united in the face of the bosses' drive for increasing profits at our expense. The fact that all the trades' contracts go together every three years is a rare thing, and we stand with the carpenters in their fight to maintain that unity.

We need that unity every day if we're to overcome the attacks on organized labor and millions of working families. We call for principled unity in the labor and progressive movements behind our courageous carpenter siblings. We know that divide and conquer is a well-worn tactic of the bosses. The labor movements and leaders celebrated today were vilified in their time. The fight for the eight-hour day was dismissed as being led by bomb throwers and outside agitators. From Peter J. McGuire to Mother Jones to Eugene V. Debs, they were all painted as despotic radicals with an agenda separate from the working class. In reality, their fights helped lift up the whole working class, as this powerful strike can also do today. For the carpenters who lay down their tools now in defense of their class, their actions will help build the fighting labor movement we so desperately need.

When union workers use their collective organization to fight and win, it lights a beacon to workers everywhere wondering how to improve their conditions, showing that the path forward is into the ranks of organized labor.

As the fighting Teamsters in 1934 said, "All workers to the unions - All unions to the struggle!"

Solidarity!

**Sign your name in solidarity with striking carpenters!**

[tinyurl.com/CarpenterSolidarityLetter](http://tinyurl.com/CarpenterSolidarityLetter)





SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 3

**COUNCILMEMBER KSHAMA SAWANT**

Tuesday September 21, 2021

Dear Executive Secretary Treasurer Shapiro and elected officers of the Western Washington Carpenters Union,

I am writing to you in solidarity with the courageous strike action taken by union carpenters in their struggle for a fair contract, demanding fully-paid parking, fully-funded benefits, family-supporting wages, improved protections against harassment, and a three-year contract along with all building and construction trades. My office, and my political organization Socialist Alternative, send you all our best wishes for a resounding victory. If the carpenters succeed, it will not only improve their standards of living and workplace conditions, it will provide a historic boost of confidence to all trades workers and the labor movement. In the context of ongoing attacks on working people, we need to build a powerful labor movement if we're going to turn things around. The carpenter strike is an important step that can provide an example to workers across the country.

We are stronger standing together, united against the bosses, and that's why it's crucial that the Martin Luther King County Labor Council, representing more than 150 unions, has gone on record standing with the carpenters' action!

As you may know, I have sent two public letters in solidarity with your members, one on September 6 and the other on September 17. As I said in my letters, no worker should have to chase overtime, worry about healthcare, retirement, or wages just to get by. We will have your back.

Carpenters have responded with a letter to my office, and to all Seattle City Councilmembers, by writing:

*"Rank and file carpenters have been organizing themselves, having recognized months ago that the proposed wages being offered by the AGC bosses were not keeping up with inflation. It is a grim reality that we cannot afford to raise a family in Seattle, a city that we build. We are grateful to you for reaching out and making clear that you stand behind carpenters' demands for better wages and fully-funded benefits."*

and

*"We hope that you will use your elected position to make further efforts, in coordination with us, to support our strike action. We urge other elected representatives to follow your example."*

As a rank-and-file union member myself, and as a thrice-elected workers' representative, I am proud to stand with union carpenters. I take home only \$40,000, and the rest of my \$140,000 City Council salary after taxes goes into a solidarity fund for workers' movements. **I pledge to donate \$10,000 from this solidarity fund to your strike fund if the carpenters' union sets one up, and I urge labor and community organizations, and progressive elected officials, to contribute as well.** I would also be happy to meet with you and your membership to talk about how we can help build further support for the strike.

Just since the COVID crisis began, American billionaires have become nearly two trillion dollars richer. And the bosses have raked in trillions more over the last decade, while workers fell behind. But when workers fight and win, it inspires workers everywhere. As the fighting Teamsters in 1934 said, "All workers to the unions - All unions to the struggle!"

Solidarity!

Kshama Sawant  
Seattle City Councilmember